FAMILY FARM SAFETY NET ACT OF 1998

HON. RICHARD A. GEPHARDT

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 25, 1998

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, today my colleagues LEONARD BOSWELL, EVA CLAYTON, JIM CLYBURN, LANE EVANS, DAVID MINGE, COLLIN PETERSON, EARL POMEROY, GLENN POSHARD, DEBBIE STABENOW and I are introducing legislation to restore the farm safety net shredded by the Republicans in the 1996 Farm Bill. House Republicans want to end the farmer safety net. Democrats want to mend it.

Over the past two years, America's farmers have watched large harvests and the Asian crisis push down grain prices as much as 40 percent. University of Missouri economists tell us that, as prices continue to fall, real net farm income could fall more than 8 percent this year. Producers are concerned. First, that the existing safety net is inadequate. Second, that even these protections, inadequate as they are, are scheduled to be phased out in a few short years.

This bill restores a sensible safety net by giving farmers a better chance to market their grain for a fair price. This bill utilizes a market-oriented tool farmers know well: the marketing loan. Marketing loans have generally provided a safety net ensuring producers 85 percent of a commodity's 5-year average price. The 1996 bill slashed the safety net by cutting these rates sharply. Our bill will establish loan rates equal to 85 percent of historic price levels—providing more income stability. Our bill boosts loan rates. Corn and soybeans up $.30 per bushel. Wheat up $.59 per bushel. Cotton up $.04 per pound.

We must take other steps to repair the safety net as well. We need an emergency price floor for dairy farmers in all regions of the country. We also need Congresswoman CLAYTON's bill to ensure hard-working farmers access to Federal credit cut off by the Republicans.

We must also extend the ethanol program. Tomorrow the Ways and Means Committee will act on the highway bill. We call upon the Republican Chairman to extend the ethanol program. Ethanol provides us clean energy—and strengthens American agriculture. The ethanol program strengthens corn prices, boosting the annual income of a typical Missouri grain farm by $15,000 to $30,000.

Last year, key Republicans opposed the ethanol program, and Congress failed to renew the program. This halted construction of a dozen ethanol plants—$700 million in investment—in rural America, costing our rural communities good-paying jobs.

Congress can do better. So we are renewing our call to the Republicans: Stop the attack on America's farmers. Let's restore the ethanol credit. Let's stand together for opportunity for Rural America.

TRIBUTE TO TOM SZELENYI

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 25, 1998

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to my dear friend and advisor Tom Szelenyi of Millbrae, California. This week he marks his 70th birthday, and his seven decades provide lessons from which all of us can learn—worthy examples about perseverance and overcoming obstacles to create a life distinguished by a commitment to his family and his community.

Mr. Speaker, Tom Szelenyi's long and unpredictable journey began on March 28, 1928, in Budapest, Hungary. The only child of a middle-class Jewish family, his early years were happy ones, marked by close friends and loving parents. His father was a traveling salesman who was away from home for a portion of every week. During this time Tom remained with his mother and freely engaged in typical childhood pranks without fear of punishment—until his father's return at the weekend.

The happy circumstances of Tom's early life were abruptly shattered on March 19, 1944, when the German Army seized control of Hungary. The occupation had swift and bloody consequences for the Hungarian Jewish population. Tom, only sixteen years old at the time, suffered mightily. Shortly after the German occupation, Nazi storm troopers arrested Tom's father and sent him to a forced labor camp. He never returned. He was murdered by a young German soldier for not working fast enough.

Tom and his mother found temporary refuge in one of the ''safe houses'' that Swedish diplomat and humanitarian Raoul Wallenberg designated as ''Swedish Legation Property'' throughout Budapest. Wallenberg's remarkable courage saved the lives of as many as 100,000 Hungarian Jews—including myself and my wife, Annette, as well as Tom Szelenyi and his mother. Through Wallenberg's efforts, Tom Szelenyi survived through the summer months, the time when the bulk of the Hungarian Jewish population was deported to Auschwitz and other Nazi death camps.

Tom's sanctuary was short-lived, however. He was captured by the Germans in the fall of 1944 and, with a group of Hungarian Jewish men, was forced to undertake a ''death march'' of exhaustion and starvation from Budapest to the Austrian border. From there, Tom was shipped to the concentration camp at Buchenwald, Germany, where he arrived in November 1944.

Tom endured seven months at Buchenwald—seven months of hunger, agonizing work details, and the ubiquitous fear of death. At the end of the war, with the American Army driving closer and closer to the center of the Third Reich, he and other surviving inmates were forced to march from Buchenwald to the concentration camp at Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia. Most of Tom's fellow prisoners succumbed during this last Nazi torment, victims of starvation, exhaustion, and cold-blooded murder. Throughout this agonizing trial, as with his many previous struggles, Tom endured, driven by the hope that he would live to create a better life for himself and his family.

The German war machine collapsed in May 1945, and Tom Szelenyi was liberated from Theresienstadt that same month. Still only a seventeen year-old boy, he then proceeded to make his way back across the war-ravaged continent to his home in Budapest. There he joyfully discovered that his mother had survived the war and had remarried.

At this time, it became evident to Tom that he had no future in Hungary. He realized that the time had come to fulfill his lifelong dream of living in the United States. Tom initially spent time in Germany and Canada, but he finally arrived in New York City in 1952—penniless, but emboldened by a hunger to build a new life in America.

His early years in this country were not easy. The young, but strong-willed Tom Szelenyi worked at a number of different jobs—loading bales of hay onto ships, loading motion picture film cans onto trucks, and then working his way up to become a movie distributor for Warner Brothers.

In late 1956, Tom received a telephone call from the Red Cross informing him that his mother had escaped from Budapest in the wake of the Hungarian uprising and that she was on her way to New York City. When she arrived, he immediately decided to take her to live in California. He had been impressed by the mild climate—he visited the state once in January and did not need to wear an overcoat. He was also attracted by the great opportunities available on the West Coast.

In California, through hard work, Tom found great success in the air freight business. He recently retired after thirty successful years in that field. He has also applied his accumulated wisdom to making a difference in his adopted homeland, and he has advised and assisted me on some of the most important decisions that I have faced in my career in public service. For some time, Tom has been my representative to the San Mateo County Democratic Central Committee, and he has served as liaison with the small business community in my district.

As successful as his business career had been and as important as his contributions to the community have been, Tom Szelenyi's proudest accomplishment is his family. In early 1957, three months after moving to the Bay Area, he met Evelyn Feiler, a charming and brilliant woman, and they were married soon after. Tom and Evelyn have enjoyed forty wonderful years together. They are the parents of two fine sons, Mark and Bob. They also have two delightful grandsons, and Tom never misses their soccer and T-ball games.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Tom Szelenyi for the integrity and example of his life and for his service to our community as he celebrates his 70th birthday. I am proud to know Tom and to have him as my friend.

SCHOOL OVERCROWDING FORUM: PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 25, 1998

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following testimony for today's CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

STATEMENT OF CARMEN CRUZ, 6TH GRADER, LOARA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ANAHEIM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Hello, my name is Carmen Cruz and school overcrowding is a problem at Loara School. That's why we have year-round school here. In my class, we move, which means we move around from room to room each month. Roving is no fun, yet it is useful because it fits in more kids at school. Some of my friends

in my room went to different schools last year but because their schools were crowded they had to come to Loara. They used to walk to their school but now they have to ride a bus to Loara. I would be really sad if I had to change schools because I would miss my friends. Before we had portables we had a bigger upper grade playground. That's one of the reasons why I don't like school overcrowding. Two other reasons are that the portables are small and there is no water inside.

At Loara there were too many students so we hired more teachers. We also had to let cars drive on the playground because there was no room for all the cars that brought kids to school. Now they're making a bigger parking lot and that means a smaller playground. It's good for the teachers and parents but not for the kids. We need funds to build more schools and they have to be close to where the kids live. One issue they're talking about in Anaheim is double sessions but that doesn't help my learning and other children's learning. My Motto about overcrowding is ''More Schools Means More Space.''

STATEMENT OF SUE PREUS, PARENT, ANAHEIM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

My name is Susan Preus. I am a mom. I very actively participate in Anaheim City School District and PTA roles. For the District, I've served, or am serving, on the year round, curriculum selection, and double session committees. I recently received a second appointment to the School Board. I have held most school site PTA offices and currently am the president of the Anaheim Elementary School Council PTA. Overriding all this school involvement is my previous statement that I am a mom, first.

I have a son in ninth grade in the Anaheim High School District. His primary education was provided in Anaheim's elementary schools. My niece, for whom I provide care, is in second grade in the Anaheim Elementary District. School overcrowding has affected me and my family since my son was in first grade. I became very active in the District nine years ago as a participant in the first committee on year-round schools. My son attended one of the first six schools to change to a multi-track year-round schedule. Over the years, the District has placed more schools on this year-round calendar to the extent that all 22 schools are now on this schedule.

Although I personally like year-round for educational reasons, it does create some problems for families. One of the largest problems is that the high school district is on a traditional calendar. This means that if you have a junior high or high school student and an elementary student your children may not have any vacation time together. Child care can be difficult especially for single parent or dual-working parent households. Parents may be able to rely on high school students for child care in the summer, of course at the expense of the older child's ''vacation.'' Such a resource is unavailable for the younger child's off track period during the traditional school year.

The community has responded slowly to the needs of children having vacation throughout the year. Children still get questioned, ''Why aren't you in school?'' if they are out and about during what is traditionally school time. When a child responds, ''I'm off track'', the questioner seldom understands what that means.

The typical summer program for children, such as scout, church, and sports camps, summer movie specials, city park and recreation activities, and even some library programs, have not accommodated the year-round students. For example, a child on Track B, with no ''summer'' month of vacation, cannot participate in any camp. ''Summer'' reading programs are active only from June through August.

It is a constant struggle to maintain a sense of community within our own schools. Keeping everyone informed of events and activities is difficult since 25% of the school population is unavailable at any given time. The year round schedule essentially created four distinct school communities. In order to fairly reach all pupils, site staff and PTA must duplicate all programs: Open House, child services (dental and health check-ups), special assemblies, award ceremonies, PTA fund-raisers, etc. It is also difficult to reach everyone for the evening enhancement activities as Family Math night or parenting classes.

PTA Boards no longer have a break from their jobs. They must try to enlist volunteers from each track so that all four school communities are represented and to ensure continuity of programs throughout the year.

The year round calendar has enabled the District to house and educate 7,000 more students than its originally designed capacity. Projections are that pupil enrollment will increase by 1,000 per year for the next five years. Unless we obtain additional facilities we are rapidly approaching another major, more distressing, change to the school schedule—double sessions.

All the extracurricular programs that are already inadequate on a year round schedule are compounded with double sessions. Do we have soccer practice in the mornings? Will the piano teacher hold lessons at 8 p.m.? Will day care watch some children all morning? And will there be enough day care to accommodate the need? These are important concerns for people with moderate standards of living. The situation is worse for those who are not financially secure. How do we implement the breakfast program? Who watches the child when the adults are at work and the family can't afford a baby sitter? What happens to a neighborhood when half the children are ''hanging out'' all morning? What happens to the sense of community? The District would be burdened with a nightmarish bus schedule, complicated classroom and associated facility usage plans, and most likely an inadequate facilities maintenance program.

Most importantly, child safety is jeopardized by a double session schedule. Imagine a first grade student walking home in the dark during a peak street traffic period. There are many horrifying situations a child could get into, and I feel the cost of a worst case scenario would be too great.

This is why I have become active in ways I never thought possible. I would never have imagined nine years ago when I became involved in my local PTA that I would now be sitting here, testifying before Congress. However, now is the time for all voices of reason to be heard. Our individual and collective mistake would be to quietly accept double sessions rather than actively support measures such as HR2695 and Governor Wilson's state bond measure. In Anaheim, we know that we must also take action locally and not rely solely on state and federal funds. That is why we are working to pass a local school bond on April 14. The costs to taxpayers for these measures is small compared to the benefits gained by all of our children.

TESTIMONY OF MARY ALICE MADDEN, TEACHER, LATHROP INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL, SANTA ANA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

It is indeed a privilege and an honor to appear before you today, and I thank you for the opportunity to do so. I have taught for 27 years, the last 17 at Lathrop Intermediate School in Santa Ana, California. During that time I have seen many changes in our schools, not the least of which has been the continual growth in our enrollment, both at my school site and throughout our District.

RAMIFICATIONS OF ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Overcrowding has many obvious ramifications on the daily operation of a school. It also has other effects which may not be as obvious at first glance. I teach at an intermediate school serving more than 2100 students in grades six, seven, and eight. Our campus is seven and a half acres in size. This is well under the recommended size for an intermediate school (which is 20 acres) and well over the ideal enrollment. We are in our sixth year on a 60–20 four-track year-round schedule. This means that we normally have 1500 to 1600 students in session at any one time.

Increased enrollment has meant that we have added 7 portable classrooms to our campus. All students and teachers have classrooms in which to meet and we have many excellent programs in place. Year-round education has many advantages, and I am not implying that it is not a sound educational strategy. As we have grown, additional teachers have been added along with an additional counselor and administrator. We have also been awarded grants to provide additional supplies and staff development opportunities.

However, continual growth from an enrollment of 1300 to our current 2100 over the last 8 years has brought some less than ideal situations. Some of the conditions resulting from our crowding include the following:

(1) Teachers traveling from classroom to classroom each period. This is a burden for those teachers as they, in some cases, move equipment and materials five times a day. Other teachers change classrooms on a monthly basis, as staff and students leave for vacation or return from vacation.

(2) We lack the ability to offer intersession classes during student vacation time because we lack classrooms in which to offer these extended year programs.

(3) We have tried to maintain class size as low as possible, but some classes are larger than we would prefer. This limits the contact time between the teacher and each student during the school day.

(4) Our library is heavily used, but we cannot always accommodate all teachers who wish to use the facility with their classes.

(5) We have an excellent computer program, with three complete labs and additional computers in the library, and we offer access before and after school, but not all classes are able to use the labs as often as they would like because of sheer numbers of students. The computers certainly do not replace the teacher, but they provide opportunities to extend lessons. Most of our students come from homes in which there is no computer access.

(6) Increased pressure on physical education facilities, as bungalows have been added, thus encroaching on available play areas.

(7) More crowded teacher work areas, as we now have 90 teachers where we once had 60.

(8) Increased pressure on the use of facilities such as rest rooms for students and staff.

(9) Increased pressure on the use of food service facilities.

(10) More crowded storage areas, as we now have more books and supplies and need more areas to store these items.

We have many excellent programs for our students before, during, and after the school day. As a school and a District I feel we have

responded creatively and effectively to the challenges which have arisen as a result of continual growth. However, if we are talking about providing the best possible educational environment for our students, we are certainly talking about additional school construction and reduction in school enrollment so all students may have maximum access to all facilities and resources.

I thank you for your interest in, and support of, our educational programs, and I thank you for the opportunity to share some of our concerns.

TESTIMONY OF JUDITH MAGSAYSAY, PRINCIPAL, PÍO PICO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SANTA ANA, CA

It is a privilege to meet with you this morning and to have this opportunity to share with you some of the challenging issues confronting just one of many overcrowded schools in Southern California. I am Judith Magsaysay, principal of Pío Pico Elementary School in the Santa Ana Unified School District.

Pio Pico is a year-round school located in central Santa Ana. The neighborhood surrounding the school is home to some 26,000 young people under the age of eighteen, making it the second densest neighborhood in the United States, in terms of youth population. There are six elementary schools, two intermediate schools and one high school all within walking distance of the Boys and Girls Club across the street from Pío Pico. Pío Pico has just under 900 students and backs up to the Lowell Elementary campus which services about 1,000 students. We are just three blocks north of Martin Elementary which also has about 1,000 students.

Due to overcrowding, we have had a ''nomadic'' history. Pío Pico opened in portables in July, 1991 on the Martin Elementary playground. At the time, Martin had 1,630 students and our new school was not scheduled to be constructed before 1994. Due to the need to better serve students in this crowded neighborhood, our Board of Education decided to open Pío Pico as a ''school within a school.'' The following July, we moved into a portable school on the lot of out future school site. A year later, in 1993, to help downsize Lowell Elementary, which had swelled to over 1,300 students, we ''annexed'' another five portables on the Lowell campus which is adjacent to our lot. Finally, in December of 1995, we moved into our new building with 600 students.

Actually, all year-around schools have nomadic teachers. Usually, four teachers share three classrooms over the course of the school year. When one of the four goes off-cycle (on vacation), she must pack up all of her personal belongings and those of her students and store them. Where space permits, schools provide closets or cabinets on rollers. At Pío Pico and at other extremely cramped campuses this moving is exacerbated by the fact that we have so little storage space for books and materials for the on-cycle teachers and students, let alone enough storage for the off-cycle teachers' materials. Many of our teachers end up taking carloads and carloads of their things home each trimester.

This requires a lot of time and physical energy on the part of the teaching an custodial staff. Teachers going off-cycle are given a one-hour early dismissal on the last day of the trimester. Those teaches who are returning receive a ''duty day'' for unpacking and setting up their classrooms. Most teachers spend many additional evening and weekend hours to adequately prepare their classroom environment for students.

Pío Pico sits on a 3.5 acre lot. The California Department of Education recommends that elementary schools be built on lots of approximately ten acres. Our lot is less then half of this optimum size . . . and that's not taking into consideration the addition of portables! The building was designed to serve a maximum of 630 students in 21 classrooms. With the four cycle year-round schedule, we were able to serve a maximum of 850 students in the 1995–96 school year.

Then along came class size reduction. We all agree that this is a good thing for kids. But in already overcrowded schools, it has been a space nightmare. There was very limited space to begin with, for children to run and play. To assist with downsizing in first grade, the District moved three portables into out already undersize playground. While awaiting the arrival and hook-up of the portables, we set up three classes of first graders in our Multipurpose Room for six months. During that time our school had no indoor gathering place for the music program, for assemblies and presentations, for after school dance clubs. etc. We held parent meetings in the library where we couldn't seat even half of the parents in attendance.

During the 1996–97 school year, a committee of teachers and parents conducted a study of alternative year-round calendars to create additional space for class size reduction in third grade. They spoke with a number of Los Angeles Unified School District staff members and parents who were on Concept 6 and realized that we could downsize in third without adding any extra portables if we switched to this year-round model. In July, 1997, the SAUSD allowed Pío Pico to begin a pilot implementation of the Concept 6 calender.

Concept 6 consists of three, instead of four cycles; that is, two cycles are in session and one cycle is on vacation. Each cycle has four months in school followed by two months of vacation. With Concept 6 we have two-thirds of our students in session as compared to the four cycle year-round schedule which has three/fourths of all students in session at the same time. This has created 3 additional classroom spaces during the school year, enough for us to downsize most of our third grades to 20:1.

On Concept 6, three teachers share two classrooms. Most of the time teachers share classrooms with the same grade level or close to it. This year, even with Concept 6, we ran out of class space and were forced to open a third/fourth grade class in October which has to rotate between a kindergarten and a fifty grade classroom. We have moved forward with a request for five additional portables to assist with what appears to be inevitable . . . more children . . . more downsizing . . . and not enough classroom, storage and meeting space.

We are currently in the process of evaluating the academic and space benefits of Concept 6 so that we can make sound recommendations to the other schools in the District that are considering Concept 6.

The biggest concern with Concept 6 is the length of vacation. While our students receive the same number of instructional minutes each year due to additional minutes each school day, they have about 13 fewer school days than the four cycle year round schools. We do offer some intersessions across the street at the Boys and Girls Club, but not enough to service more than half of the 300 off-cycle students due to space and financial constraints.

We are fortunate to have a Title VII project at Pío Pico which helps to pay the cost of compensating teachers for conducting intersession classes with their students. Most schools do not have enough money to do this and the summer school dollars are not allocated for our year-round schools.

OTHER PRESSING ISSUES

Due to lack of space, our school cannot accommodate a Head Start Program or Day Care for off-cycle children. Those families most in need of pre-school and intersession interventions are most often in our most crowded neighborhoods. The few Head Start Programs that we have in Santa Ana are filled to capacity, with waiting lists. We are hopeful that outside organizations, such as churches and in our case, the Boys and Girls Club across the street will receive requested funds to allow Head Start to use available facilities or to place portables on their sites for pre-school and off-cycle child care purposes.

A Joint-Use Facility Agreement is currently in the works between the SAUSD and the City of Santa Ana Parks and Recreation Department. We have fewer than half the number of parks and recreational facilities in our city compared to other cities our size. Santa Ana has approximately 330,000 residents. We have 40 parks and eight community centers. Oakland, with 380,000 residents has 100 parks and 24 community centers. Minneapolis has 360,000 residents and 100 parks and 70 community centers. Through joint-use agreements, Santa Ana schools will be more fully utilized for both recreational and educational purposes after school hours.

I am hopeful that today's hearing will help clarify some of the issues and possible solutions to overcrowding. We must find creative solutions by engaging the larger community, as well as our State and Federal governments in issues impacting the education and well-being of our children, our future.

TESTIMONY OF MIKE VAIL, PRESIDENT, CAL-FED INFRASTRUCTURE COALITION

INTRODUCTION

Good morning. My name is Mike Vail. I am the President of the Cal-Fed Infrastructure Coalition, a statewide organization of school districts and business interests which was established to support Federal school facilities funding efforts. I also serve as Senior Director of Facilities Planning and Governmental Relations for the Santa Ana Unified School District, one of the fastest growing school districts in California.

School districts throughout the nation, including those in Orange County, are facing a facilities crisis. A combination of factors, including record student enrollment growth, deteriorating buildings and lack of funding for educational technology, has fueled this crisis. And it threatens our ability to prepare today's students for the workplace of the twenty-first century.

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Between 1986 and 1997, national K–12 public school enrollment increased by 14 percent, to a record total of 45.2 million students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, this number will reach 48.3 million by the year 2007. The 3.1 million projected new students will create a need for over 6,000 more schools across the nation.

The impact of this projected enrollment growth will likely be greatest for urban school districts such as those in Santa Ana and Anaheim, since urban districts already have the most overcrowded schools. According to the Council of Great City Schools, the average number of students per school in the U.S. was approximately 511 in 1993–94. But this same average for the districts which serve the greatest number of Title I students was 713, 40 percent above the national average.

The national enrollment growth trend has been mirrored in Orange County. More students keep coming to our community's schools. In 1986, countywide K–12 enrollment was 337,000. In 1990, it had reached 368,226. By 1996, it had grown to an all-time high of 434,420 students, a 22 percent increase over a

ten year period. This enrollment growth has resulted in a corresponding need for new classrooms. Approximately $203 million in new construction applications from orange County school districts are currently on file at the Office of Public School Construction in Sacramento. This figure does not represent the total need, since the State's eligibility rules and the lack of funding discourages many districts from submitting applications.

Santa Ana Unified, the County's largest school district, has experienced long-term student increases which began in 1979. Over the last 18 years, the district's enrollment has almost doubled, growing from 28,700 to nearly 54,000. For the last five years, the largest single grade level in Santa Ana has been kindergarten. As a result, it has been especially challenging for the district to implement Governor Wilson's Class Size Reduction program in grades K through 3.

RESPONSES TO OVERCROWDING

In the past, most California school districts have depended on State monies to meet construction financing needs. Funding for the State School Building Program is derived from the proceeds of statewide school construction bond measures. However, this funding source is very undependable because the State Legislature sometimes fails to place a bond measure on a statewide ballot and the voters of California sometimes reject these measures. Since 1993, only one statewide school construction bond measure has been approved by the voters. The State currently has no funds available to pay for new projects.

Local school districts in California have the ability to present bond measures to the voters within their community. However, such measures require a two-thirds ''yes'' vote, making approval extremely difficult to obtain. California is one of only four states which has a two-thirds vote requirement for local school construction bond measures. Districts can issue Certificates of Participation (COPs), a lease-related financing, without voter approval. The debt payment of COPs issues is an obligation of the district General Fund. Since per student education funding in California is among the lowest in the U.S., most districts are hard-pressed to support substantial COPs debt.

Because of the lack of construction funding, California districts have turned to other methods to meet the need for more classrooms, including use of multi-track year-round schedules and the installation of portable classrooms on existing school sites. In Santa Ana Unified, 23 of 32 elementary schools and four of seven intermediate schools utilize year-round schedules. The district is currently using over 600 portable classrooms on existing campuses—the equivalent of 27 elementary schools. Over 35 percent of Santa Ana Unified's classroom capacity is provided by portable classrooms. The presence of these portables impact a school's core facilities, such as restrooms and food service areas. They encroach on our small playfields, and are more expensive to maintain than permanent classrooms.

Despite these measures, Santa Ana Unified needs to build at least one new high school and three new elementary schools. These projects would not provide enough classrooms to implement the State's Class Size Reduction (CSR) program at additional grade levels, nor would they relieve the need for portable classrooms or year-round schedules. These projects would simply allow the District to ''keep its head above water.'' In order to fully implement the State's Class Size Reduction program in grades K–3, the District would need to add approximately 200 additional classrooms—the equivalent of nine new elementary schools. If CSR was implemented in grades K–6, 500 more classrooms would be required.

CONDITION OF FACILITIES/LACK OF TECHNOLOGY

At a time when student enrollments are reaching all-time levels, existing facilities are in need of major modernization efforts. In 1995, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) issued a number of national reports detailing the condition of America's public schools. The GAO found that one-third of public schools, attended by approximately 14 million students, needed ''extensive repair or replacement of one or more buildings.'' Almost 60 percent of the nation's public schools reported at least one major building feature in disrepair. Those features included roofs, exterior walls, windows, plumbing, heating/ventilation/air conditioning, electrical power and lighting. Three-quarters of these buildings needed multiple features repaired. About half of all public schools reported at least one unsatisfactory environmental condition. Those included poor ventilation, heating/lighting problems, or poor security.

According to the GAO, fewer than half of America's public schools have sufficient technology infrastructure, including modems, phone lines and wiring for networks. Even in schools with enough computers, over one-third reported insufficient wiring for computers and communication technology. Accordingly to the CEO Forum on Education & Technology, two-thirds of America's schools are connected to the Internet, but only 14 percent of classrooms have Internet access. The business leaders also found that only three percent of public schools are using technology to maximum benefit.

Santa Ana Unified's backlog of major modernization and maintenance projects totals over $45 million. Twenty-one of 45 schools are over 30 years old. Fifteen of these schools are in need of major renovation. Currently, 5,953 computers are being used by the district's 54,000 students. Approximately 2,900 of these computers are obsolete and unable to connect to the Internet. Most district classrooms have been wired to have the capability of linking with the Internet. However, our shortage of computers (the ratio is one computer for every 17 students) limits actual Internet usage by students.

The condition of existing classrooms is important because research shows that facilities affect learning. A study performed in Washington, D.C., schools revealed that the standardized test scores of students in schools rated in ''fair'' condition were 5.45 percentage points higher than those of students in schools rated as ''poor.'' The difference in schools between ''excellent'' and ''poor'' was 10.9 percentage points, which is significant. Research in Virginia of building condition and students' achievement and behavior demonstrated a five to seven percent difference in percentile ranking of students in higher-quality buildings. A similar study conducted on a statewide basis in North Dakota showed four to 11 points difference in scores when comparing building condition and student achievement.

CONCLUSION

California is trying to do something about our overwhelming school facilities problem. Governor Wilson has proposed placing $8 billion in state bonds for school construction on the ballot over four elections. The Governor has also proposed a permanent funding source for the K–12 maintenance program. To assist local communities, Mr. Wilson supports reducing the threshold for passage of local school bonds to a simply majority. All of these measures would be extremely helpful to school districts.

We recognize that school construction is primarily a state and local responsibility. But our coalition feels that California's rising student enrollments and overcrowded conditions are creating pressures that must be addressed by all levels of government. Governor Wilson's program is a major step forward. However, it does not totally resolve the school facilities crisis.

The need is greater than the resources which are currently available. The Federal government should join in a partnership by assisting state and local governments in meeting the school facilities crisis in California and all other states. There is a national interest in strong local educational systems with school facilities properly equipped to motivate our children. This is how they will learn the skills necessary to succeed in a technological and competitive marketplace. The school infrastructure issue is just as critical a national need as the long-standing Federal commitment to assist state and local communities in the building of our roads and highways.

Thank you, Congressmember Sanchez, for your efforts to make your colleagues in Congress aware of this crisis. The legislation that you have introduced will provide Federal financial incentives for local districts to build the schools needed for the students of today and tomorrow. The Cal-Fed Infrastructure Coalition supports this legislation.

We ask you and your colleagues in Congress to work with President Clinton on a bipartisan basis to devise a program which will allow the Federal government to give our states and local communities incentives to build the schools our children need.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about these important issues. I look forward to answering any questions that you might have.

THE STATUS OF SCHOOL FACILITIES IN CALIFORNIA

Presented by Sue Pendleton, California Department of Education

SCHOOL FACILITY NEEDS IN CALIFORNIA

Increased student population.

Modernization and retrofitting of old school facilities.

Deferred maintenance.

Class size reduction.

Child care.

PAST GROWTH IN STUDENT POPULATION

In the past 10 years, California has built enough schools to house over 1.2 million new students (a 28% increase in enrollment).

To do this, California school facilities increased to house the entire student populations of the states of Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming and Nevada.

SCHOOL FACILITIES NEEDS DUE TO INCREASED STUDENT POPULATION

In the next 10 years, the Department of Finance predicts California's K–12 population will grow by another 604,000 students to a total of nearly 6.2 million students by the year 2006.

To accommodate this 11% increase, California will need to build almost as many schools as currently exist in all of Oregon and Colorado.

It is estimated that $8 billion will be necessary to meet this need.

SCHOOL FACILITIES NEEDS

Even without enrollment growth, California has school facilities needs.

School facilities needs: Modernization and technology

It is estimated that over 50% of existing schools are over 30 years old and many are badly in need of repair. Additionally, schools

built in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s are not capable of meeting the technology needs of the 21st century.

To modernize, repair and retrofit existing school facilities will cost an estimated $22 billion over the next 10 years.

Other school facilities needs

Deferred maintenance—estimated to cost $6 billion in the next 10 years.

Class size reduction—cost depends on the number of grades implemented—permanent construction for four grade levels is estimated to cost $2.5 billion, not including land.

Child care—estimated to cost $500,000,000 in the next decade.

California's School Facilities: 10-Year Need Recap

	Billions
Increased student population	$8
(Does not include existing backlog)	
Modernization of old school facilities	22
Deferred maintenance	6
Class size reduction	2.5
Child care	5
Total need	$39

HOW TO MEET CALIFORNIA'S SCHOOL FACILITIES NEEDS

Historically, school facilities have been funded via a menu of funding options.

How to Meet the Need

State bonds—Amount raised in the past 10 years: $9.8 billion; Percentage of total funding: 46%; Must be placed on the ballot by the Legislature and passed by the voters.

Local bonds (except for 1978–1986 when Proposition 13 eliminated local bonds as a funding source)—Amount raised in the past 10 years: $5.9 billion; Percentage of total funding: 28%; Only half of the attempted elections pass.

Special taxes—Parcel taxes and Mello-Roos Community Facilities Districts (first authorized in 1983)—Amount raised in the past 10 years: $800 million ($.8 billion); Percentage of total funding: 4%; For registered voter approval, passage rate of less than 50%.

Developer fees—Amount raised in the past 10 years; $2.5 billion; Percentage of total funding: 12%; Limited to providing facilities for new development.

Deferred maintenance—Amount raised in the past 10 years: $1 billion; Percentage of total funding: 4%; Funding based on amount of excess bond repayments.

Multitrack year-round education to reduce the need for new construction—Construction cost avoided in the past 10 years: $1.2 billion; Percentage of total funding: 6%.

Other funding sources

Redevelopment.

Asset management.

Parcel tax.

Certificates of Participation repaid by school district general fund.

Federal Government.

California's School Facilities: Historical 10-Year Funding Recap

	Billions
State bonds	$9.8
Local bonds	5.9
Mello-Roos (special taxes)	0.8
Developer fees	2.5
Deferred maintenance	1.0
MTYRE (cost avoided)	1.2
Total funding	$21.2

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SCHOOL FACILITIES?

Key players: Local education agencies and Governmental agencies such as State Allocation Board; California Department of Education, School Facilities Planning Division; Department of General Services, Office of Public School Construction and Division of the State Architect; and the Federal Government.

NATIONAL TRENDS AND LOCAL IMPACT: CONDITION OF SCHOOL FACILITIES IN THE ANAHEIM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT (ACSD)

By Maria Elena Romero, Assistant Superintendent, ACSD

WELCOME TO LOARA ELEMENTARY

Loara auditorium—53 years old. Loara classrooms were built between 1953 and 1957. Enrollment at Loara is over 900 students: 120 Kindergartners in double sessions; 284 students in 1st and 2nd grades participating in Class Size Reduction under a limited waiver; and 49 students in special education classes in four classrooms.

OTHER FACTS ABOUT ACSD

Average age of buildings in the District is 43 years old.

Nine of our 22 schools have enrollments of over 1,000 students.

One half of our sites are under 7 acres in size.

More than 200 portables are installed throughout the District. Some are over 25 years old.

STUDENT POPULATION GROWTH

ACSD has 22 schools serving over 20,230 students from kindergarten through 6th grade.

ACSD serves the central portion of the City of Anaheim.

ACSD's enrollment grew over 7,500 students in the last decade.

During the same period, only relatively small residential housing development has occurred within District's boundaries.

OPTIONS TO INCREASE CAPACITY

Scheduling solutions: Year round calendar, staggered sessions, double sessions.

Building solutions: Portable buildings, permanent buildings.

ORIGINAL VS. CURRENT CAPACITY

Design capacity 12,220—58%.
Portable capacity: 5,600—26%.
Year round capacity: 3,217—15%.

YEAR ROUND CALENDAR IMPACTS

Maintenance: Facilities are used almost 100% of the time. Lack of down time for preventive work. All major construction work must be done with students on campus.

Rotation of classes: Lack of storage space; furniture size; classroom environment.

PORTABLE BUILDINGS ISSUES

Cost is approximately $70,000 to $80,000 per unit properly installed. Installation of sinks may increase this cost even further.

Districts benefit from the flexibility.

Availability is subject to supply and demand.

Ground space may be used in a less than optimum manner.

ACSD FACILITIES NEEDS

Facilities costs are estimated at $100 million: Four additional schools and modernization of existing 21 schools.

Funding sources: General fund $9 million; local bond $48 million; State match $45 million.

TESTIMONY BY JUDITH MICHAELS, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Reducing class size in California has pushed the topic of school facilities to the forefront of issues facing California education. To provide students with the tools they need to succeed, we must address the challenge of creating funding mechanisms that will match the current and projected need for adequate school and higher education facilities. The need for new schools, modernization of older schools, and technology far exceeds available resources. California's schools currently rely on a combination of resources to meet their facility needs: state bonds, local bonds, developer fees, Mello-Roos Districts, and cost savings by adopting multi-track year round scheduling. As we approach the millennium, we need to look at how this pattern will serve the future, and revise and change the pattern so that we can build the schools we need.

While much debate about school construction focuses on developing regions, densely populated areas, whether in the cities or in suburbia, need to build or perhaps re-build their schools. Many children have spent their academic careers in portables because of overcrowding; for this reason we believe that we must allocate portions of state and federal funds for what we have come to call unhoused students.

After a hiatus in the early nineties, California increased its spending on education last year. The increased education budget demonstrated the success of Proposition 98, California's constitutional amendment guaranteeing that a fixed portion of state revenue be allocated to education. This money went to expand the class size reduction program, expand reading initiatives for grades four through eight, and expand community college resources to provide education, training, and child care to help those on welfare return to work. Since school districts cannot use Proposition 98 funds to build schools, this expansion of educational opportunities for students served to exacerbate the facilities crisis. We believe your H.R. 2695 will offer assistance as we continue to work on local solutions. Here are some of the things we are doing.

STATE BOND

A combination of state and local bonds builds schools. State School Construction Bonds reach the ballot through a series of proposals, debates, compromises, and votes. As on the budget, the state legislature must achieve a two-thirds majority in each house before a Bond proposal goes to the ballot. The legislature failed to achieve this majority in 1997, and work continues on proposals and compromises. We hope that these will be successful so that California's voters can vote on a state bond this June.

MAJORITY VOTE FOR LOCAL BONDS

While we believe that the state's primary funding source should remain the general obligation bond, we need to increase California's capacity to raise local funds, and that means changing the current the two-thirds majority requirement for passage of local general obligation bonds. A measure passed by the State Senate currently awaits action in the Assembly.

SCHOOL CONFIGURATION

In the debate on school facilities we must not lose sight of the purpose of building schools. We encourage school districts to explore, design, and implement forms of school organization and management that will avoid excess administrative costs and promote the instructional goals of each school. Before building schools, we should consider the effect the ever increasing size of schools has had upon the education of our students. A misreading of the economies of scale associated with specialization in schools has contributed to a steady increase in school size.

These larger schools may be cheaper to administer, but they reduce social supervision of students to the detriment of the larger society. And, at some point, the advantages of economies of scale turn into liabilities. For example, one of the factors that reduces the economies associated with large schools is the cost of transportation, both in direct expenditures and in the cost in student time,

time that students could more profitably spend on academic work. Furthermore, we believe that larger schools have detrimental effects upon students, teachers, and classified staffs; because of the greater size of the schools, we often find more anonymity and alienation. Additionally, large schools lessen each child's opportunities to participate in different social activities in the school setting.

New patterns of education administration, such as re-configuring grade levels or creating schools within schools, help alleviate problems caused by multi-track year-round scheduling, and offer great potential for schools to be run economically and to be educationally sound.

CONTINUING AND COALITION EFFORTS

The national interest in ensuring high quality education for all students inextricably links California-based efforts with those from Washington. The California Federation of Teachers is part of the California-DC Alliance, composed of millions of Californians committed to better education: K–12 school districts and associations, large and small business throughout California, the State Department of Education, labor unions, and law firms. While not a lobbying organization, the Alliance nonetheless works to identify issues critical to the economic health of California and to help keep the California's Congressional Delegation aware of the impact of Federal decisions upon local schools.

Nationally, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association are working together on a proposal to bring more dollars into school construction. We have created a private sector task force to survey novel ways of increasing available resources to local school districts. This Task Force is looking at ways to leverage more dollars out of the private sector as well as different forms of bonds. We will keep you informed of its progress.

TESTIMONY OF DR. JAMES A. FLEMING, SUPERINTENDENT CAPISTRANO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Good morning. My name is James A. Fleming. I am Superintendent of the Capistrano Unified School District here in Orange County. My district is the largest geographically among the 28 districts in our county and is the 3rd largest in student population, with just over 40,000 students.

Before commenting on the challenge which faces my district and many in Orange County and California, I want to, first, express sincere appreciation on behalf of my School Board and me to Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez for the leadership she has demonstrated on a wide variety of issues of interest and concern to public school advocates. We especially want to thank her today for planning this forum and for her leadership on the ''Expand and Rebuild America's Schools Act of 1997.'' The creation of a new class of national tax-exempt bonds may be just the incentive needed to provide facilities funding to assist suburban districts build new schools and renovate deteriorating schools as the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds provided for our nation's urban areas.

I thought the most helpful approach to be taken with my brief comments is to use the plight of my own school district as a case study demonstrating the urgency of the subject which calls us together this morning.

Of California's 999 school districts, Capistrano Unified is the 11th largest. Arguably, however, it is the fastest growing. This year alone, we realized an enrollment of 40,115, up from 37,431, our 1996–97 enrollment. This one-year increase in enrollment which could fill six elementary schools, three middle schools or a high school, by itself, represents a 7.3% growth, and this is only the latest year of a pattern. In early 1991, just as I was assuming the Superintendency post of Capistrano Unified, our K–12 enrollment was 23,734 students. With the 1997–98 K–12 enrollment of 40,115 which I just referenced, we have experienced a phenomenal 62% increase in student enrollment in slightly more than half a decade.

Our district has coped well with this growth under the circumstances. First, with well over $100 million in state school bond money, we were able to apply creative financing and strategic planning which, combined with local dollars, allowed us to build twelve brand new schools within a single 5-year period. We have two more schools under construction at this time and eight more on the drawing board, if the state ever fills its empty school construction coffers. We also presently have a total of 607 relocatable buildings on the grounds supplementing our 40 permanent school campuses. But still, with the growth we are experiencing, even that is not enough.

Many in our district blame new residential development on school overcrowding. While there is no question that residential development has exacerbated the problem—particularly in districts like Capistrano—an even more significant causal factor of school overcrowding is an increase in the birth rate. One need only compare Capistrano's kindergarten enrollment to that of 12th grade to witness the trend. Last June our district bid adieu to 2,143 seniors who graduated from one of our five high schools. This September we then greeted 3,456 new kindergartners. These 1997 numbers are only the most recent indicators of a trend which has been in place for the last six years. Moreover, since CUSD's dropout rate of 1.6% is negligible, it cannot be assumed that part of the reason for the much lower number of graduating seniors than entering kindergartners is attributable to students dropping out of school.

We who administer and set policy for the public schools eagerly anticipate the entrée of the federal government in helping to meet the housing needs of a tremendously growing student population across America. I have been a public educator for 35 years and do not remember a time when Washington has ever stepped forward on the issue of school facilities in the manner represented by the ''Expand and Rebuild America's School Act.'' The problem is clearly beyond any state's ability to address alone.

To those of us in high-growth districts within the State of California this federal interest is like a breath of fresh air. Very frankly, we have been disappointed in the state's response to classroom overcrowding up to this point. Inconceivably, even astoundingly, after instituting a high-profile facilities-intensive primary class size reduction program on top of record setting student growth, the State Legislature has refused, since 1996, to even place a state school bond on the ballot for the voters to consider. Our Republican Governor has stepped forward and provided leadership on the facilities issue through a series of bills which the Senate and Assembly will consider this session. The newspapers report that the one place he faces opposition is from members of his own party, state elected officials who ironically represent the highest growth parts of the state. I just don't understand it.

While, the state currently has no money for school construction, local districts which venture into the local bond arena are shackled with an unrealistic and usually unattainable obstacle: overcoming a situation where one negative vote counts double what a positive vote does.

With no state money available and with our hands tied because of the extraordinary 2/3 vote requirement to pass local bonds, California school districts find themselves in a vise. There is hope, however, if the Governor's-supported package of bills before the legislature this year has a chance of passing: an $8.2 billion state bond issue; an initiative streamlining the school construction/renovation program, and a constitutional amendment permitting majority vote approval for local school bonds. Then we can, at least, begin to realistically address the problem.

While parents and educators will continue to present our school facilities case to our state legislators, and hope for a successful 1998 California legislative session, it is comforting to know that our leadership in Washington, D.C. has recognized the school overcrowding phenomenon as one of the most serious challenges in public education. Then, through such legislative proposals as the Expand and Rebuild America's Schools Act of 1997, willing to take action in the interests of the children of our nation, children who are our hope and our investment in the future.

SCHOOL OVERCROWDING

By Jacinth M. Cisneros

My name is Jacinth Cisneros. I have lived in Orange County for more than 40 years with 22 of those years in Anaheim. I have two children. (A 3rd grade boy and a 7th grade girl.) They attend schools within both the Anaheim City School District and the Anaheim Union High School District. Our family lives are complicated as one child is on a year-round schedule and the other is on a traditional schedule with summers off. I am fortunate to be a housewife in order to juggle the complexities of being a parent. Many of our families do not have the benefit of a parent that can stay home.

I am concerned about the education of my children. I am also concerned about the education of all of our children—yours, mine, and the children in the neighborhood down the street. I have watched Anaheim change over the past two decades. Ten years ago we were surprised by our enrollment increase. (The baby boomers finally decided to become parents.) We thought, ''This can't continue. It will stop, even slow down.'' Five years ago, we were in denial. No one believed the increase and certainly no one believed it would continue. Today, we still continue to grow and to grow and to grow. We are currently over-enrolled by 7,000 students. Demographers project that we will continue to grow 1,000 more students each year for the next five years. The school my son attends was designed to house 600 students. It now houses approximately 1,100 students, with twice the staff and fewer restrooms than 30 years ago. The reality of our numbers slapped us in the face and rudely woke us up! As a community, we came together to work out our problems. Many years ago six of our schools went to a year-round multi-track schedule increasing our ability to house our children. Progressively more and more schools went year-round until, finally, last year the remaining six schools went to the same schedule increasing their capacity by approximately 25%. (Remember that was just last year.) Where are they coming from? There is no new construction, no new housing. How can this be? Anaheim is an affordable community for young families and our schools have continued to offer good, solid quality education. As our seniors move out, a family with young children moves in living close to their work-place. We are also faced with extended families and multiple families living in one home or apartment. Come this July we will be out of space again as 1,000

more students arrive on our school house steps. What will we do?

Up until now, Anaheim has coped well with its problems—maybe too well. Each new wave of enrollment led to using a new band-aid that fixed the problem temporarily. (The year-round band-aid had to be applied several times. The portable classroom band-aid continues to be applied.) Right now—our 1st aid kit is empty—no more Band-Aids and we are bleeding badly. At the very least, we need major surgery and possibly CPR.

The Anaheim School Board responded immediately to the 911 calls from the community by placing on the April 1998 ballot a $48 million school bond measure for new school construction and reconstruction of our existing sites. We were given the opportunity to help! A committee of parents, community members, teachers, and business leaders have been working countless hours to educate residents about the problems within our schools and the need for a solution; to carry the message that WE NEED CLASSROOMS and we need to repair the ones we already have. All of the schools in Anaheim are at least 30 years old with plumbing, electrical and sewer systems that need upgrading or replacing. If a generous business in Anaheim donated computers to all our classrooms, we would not be able to use them. Our electrical systems do not have the capacity to handle today's technology. What about the technology of the future? We want our children to continue to be able to compete on the world market. We should have a world class educational system in Anaheim to match the world class entertainment complex in our backyard. Our teachers and administrators should focus on providing the best educational program for our children. They shouldn't have to worry about our constant lack of facilities and problems with space. As a community and as a country we should be able to provide the foundation to build a powerful educational institution. Our schools should not be dealing with Band-Aids and should not worry about where to put the next tourniquet.

Passage of the school bond will ease our pain to a degree, but we still need your help. This bond will allow Anaheim schools to access state school funding when it becomes available. The Governor has proposed a $2 billion statewide bond providing additional matching funds for the schools. With that money we come closer to actually solving some of our housing problems. Federal assistance in the form of tax free bonds as proposed by H.R. 2695 would move us along toward actually healing our housing ''wounds.'' Funds ''freed'' by H.R. 2695 provide our district with the ability to repair a sinking playground, renovate an entire school, build a lunch structure, or replace old blackboards in all of our classrooms. The possibility exists of coupling the funds for new school construction and matching it with state funds as well. Our children would benefit twice as much.

We cannot do it alone. We need your help. We need you to recognize the problems and work with us to solve them. When we pull together—local communities, the state and the federal government, we will only produce a stronger educational system. We will be able to utilize all of our assets to the maximum. We will succeed in investing in the future of our children. We will communicate to the world that we value our children and their education.

If indeed the emergency crews do not arrive in time, if indeed our bond measure does not pass, if indeed the governor's statewide bond or H.R. 2695 does not pass, there is yet one alternative left to try. I need to be honest. It does not cost much money and will double the capacity of our schools immediately—double sessions. Although financially the cost is insignificant, what will the cost be to our families? to our community? to the future of our children? Those costs cannot be measured. The impact is too great! When one session of children begins school at sun up and the other session leaves at sun down, what becomes of the family? Will the Girl Scout Troop or Boy Scout Troop reschedule their meetings to be held at 8:00 at night or how about eight o'clock in the morning? What about soccer or baseball teams? Will the dance teacher offer morning classes? I think the costs of double sessions are too great!

Our children's future is everyone's responsibility from the custodian to the superintendent, from the superintendent to the mayor, from the mayor to the governor, and from the governor to the President. Passage of a local bond will still not provide enough funds to close the gap that spreads wider and wider over the years. State matching funds will help and federal tax incentives for suburban schools are essential. Provide us with the life line we need to keep us from using any more Band-Aids from our first aid kit.

STATEMENT BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF EDUCATION FOR LEGISLATION SCOTT S. FLEMING

Representative Sanchez, Minority Leader Gephardt. First, I want to thank you Congresswoman, for calling this important Forum, and extend my appreciation to you, Congressman Gephardt, for taking the time to be here to join us in making a very simple point: there is a critical need, here in California and across the nation, to address compelling school infrastructure needs.

Whether you are here in California with the fastest growing school enrollments in the nation or in the nation's rust belt where all too often schools have deteriorated to the point where they pose serious safety threats to their students, this nation shares an urgent need to build and renovate school buildings to serve students today and into the next century. In June of 1996, the General Accounting Office issued a report which found a backlog of over $111 billion in repairs and improvements to school facilities nationwide. At the same time, the National Center for Education Statistics projects that school enrollment will increase from 51.7 to 54.6 million between 1996 and 2006. Simply to hold our own and maintain current class sizes, that growth in number of students will require over 6,000 more schools than existed in 1996. Here in California, the 1996 enrollment which had been projected to be over 5.8 million is anticipated to reach nearly 6.9 million in 2006—more than one million new students. Again, without even taking into account efforts to reduce class sizes, that would necessitate more than 40,000 new classrooms in California within a decade. We should make no mistake about the fact that, with all of the talk about meeting the nation's infrastructure needs—highways, airports and the like, failure to also address the school infrastructure needs of this nation will have a serious impact not only on the individual lives of millions of American students, but also on our nation's future economic prosperity.

As you well know, in the summer of 1996, President Clinton proposed a major initiative to assist localities in addressing this critical need. He proposed a $5 billion package designed to leverage, by ''buying down'' interest rates on local school bonds, $20 billion in school infrastructure improvements across the nation over a four year period. We realized at the time we made that proposal that it would not be an instant or complete solution to this critical situation, but it was a bold step forward, moving the federal government into a new role in assisting local authorities to respond to school overcrowding and deteriorated school buildings in accordance with locally-designed initiatives. That legislation was introduced in both Houses of the Congress—in the House of Representatives by Representative Nita Lowey of New York and in the Senate by Senator Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois. We deeply appreciated their leadership and that shown by both of you in working to gain strong support within the Congress for the plan. Unfortunately, during last summer's bipartisan negotiations which led to the historic budget agreement subsequently adopted by the Congress and signed by the President, in spite of strong support by the Administration, it proved impossible to include the school construction initiative within the agreed upon budgetary framework. While the budget package made very significant investments in education, the absence of the school construction proposal was a major disappointment. Since that time, Secretary Riley and the President have made clear their intent to continue to seek ways to finance a school construction initiative, and that has been a priority in the development of the Fiscal Year 1999 budget which will be released on February 2.

Before moving on, I want to make sure to emphasize that last year's budget agreement included an important Congressional initiative that focuses on the need to help school's serving at least 35% students eligible for free and reduced priced lunches under the Department of Agriculture's school lunch program. That proposal, originated by Representative Rangel of New York, the senior Democratic member of the House Committee on Ways and Means, provides $800 million in special bonding authority to make available interest-free capital for startup costs—including rehabilitation or repair, equipment purchases, and development of course materials and training expenses—for special schools or programs within schools. That $800 million in financing is available in two installments, $400 million in the current tax year and $400 million in tax year 1999. That important assistance for public education is being administered by the Department of the Treasury which last month released regulations to implement the new authority. Under the allocations determined by the Treasury Department, $112.7 million of that interest-free capital will be available to meet needs right here in California. I know that both of you have been supportive of the Rangel program and that, you, Congresswoman Sanchez, have introduced your own legislation, the ''Expand and Rebuild America's Schools Act,'' which expands upon that new approach and focuses it on construction and the pressing needs facing Orange County and similar communities around the nation. Your initiative is an important and valuable contribution to the work that is underway to ensure that real help is provided by the federal government to meet this need.

Earlier witnesses today have made very clear the real-life impact of school overcrowding on their lives. As the parent of a teenager who spent his fifth grade in a portable classroom in a Virginia public school, I can personally relate to much of what those individuals had to say. When students are left to learn in overcrowded or antiquated facilities, when their schedules are set to fill available space, not to structure the learning experience at optimal times for those young students, the challenge of preparing young minds for success in the twenty-first century is made tremendously more difficult. Just last week, Secretary Riley visited a school in Los Angeles with your colleague, Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald. When

they arrived, an unexpected fire-drill was underway. None of us would deny the importance of knowing how to quickly evacuate a school building, but this fire-drill was not for that purpose. It had been triggered by wiring that had been damaged as a result of a leak in the school's roof. The result was lost time in a school day. Any teacher, any principal can tell you that such unnecessary exercises are distracting and disruptive and that losing a block of time like that is not easily reclaimed. That unnecessary fire drill robbed hundreds of young students of important learning time. The same is true when students have to take added time over and over again in a school day to move from portable classrooms to other school activities.

All of this takes on added importance as we seek to maximize the tremendous potential that technology holds to broaden and strengthen education in America. This month, as a result of changes enacted by the Congress in the Telecommunications Act, schools and libraries across this nation become eligible to benefit from reduced rates for accessing the Internet. Those resources can assist both with readying schools to bring computers on line and in covering the monthly access charges that schools will need to build into their operating budgets. These reduced rates, known as the E-Rate, offer tremendous opportunities to young Americans. But the fact of the matter is that school facilities have to be up to the task. Inadequate wiring systems and overcrowding alike can severely limit or even preclude altogether schools' ability to take advantage of the opportunities that technology makes possible.

As this Forum comes to a close and you head back to Washington, I know you and Secretary Riley will be working closely together to impress upon your colleagues in the Congress the importance of moving forward, in partnership with local school districts—like the Anaheim City School District, Santa Ana Unified, and others in this area—to put in place a serious, but fiscally responsible approach to meeting these compelling needs. Balancing the budget is not an end in and of itself. Instead, now that we are on target to meeting that goal, we must work together to ensure that essential investments are made that will enable our economy to grow. Educating those who will be the economic brainpower of the next century ranks at the top of those investments, and, as I said earlier, the task of educating all young people to high standards is made much more difficult when they are forced to learn in overcrowded or structurally deficient environments.

The task of the Congress and the Administration this year will be to ensure that the federal government does its part. Legislation will be on the table with Administration support. We need to work together to move that legislation into law.

COMPETITION IN THE LONG DISTANCE MARKETS

HON. CARRIE P. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 25, 1998

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I don't understand why a potential key player in the long distance market is being systematically eliminated.

For the past two years the FCC has detracted from the process and has not assisted in making local telecommunication competition a reality.

Some long distance companies have been quoted publicly as saying that they are going to ignore the local residential market because of the limited revenue it produces. Meanwhile, they have pursued with great zeal local business markets.

Why has the FCC ignored these factors? The Regional Bell Companies are not offering long distance service today because of the FCC's misinterpretation of the 1996 Telecommunications Law. The FCC continues to reject approved recommendations from states suggesting the absence of competition in local markets. That is not correct. Competition is out there. Why has it been overlooked?

The FCC should take off its dark glasses and open its eyes to the intense competition in the local market. The Bells shouldn't be kept out of the long distance market because of business decisions made by their potential competitors. The Bells have made a good faith effort to open the market and judging from the amount of local business competition, they've succeeded. They deserve entry into the long distance market.